

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 1147

By Henry

A RESOLUTION to honor the memory of Marvin Runyon of Nashville.

WHEREAS, the members of this General Assembly were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Marvin T. Runyon, former automobile industry executive, Chairman of the Tennessee Valley Authority, Postmaster General and civic and community leader; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Runyon was a highly energetic, talented and focused business executive and an exemplary and innovative administrator of high-profile government agencies; always a consummate professional, he worked assiduously to improve the quality of life for his fellow citizens in numerous capacities; and

WHEREAS, born September 16, 1924, in Dallas, Texas, Marvin Runyon took a job at age 19 at a Ford Motor Company assembly plant in Dallas as an hourly worker; he next served two years in the United States Army Air Corps as a flight engineer, and following his discharge in 1945 he returned to Ford Motor Company in Dallas; and

WHEREAS, in 1948, Mr. Runyon graduated from Texas A&M and took an assembly line job at the Ford plant in Atlanta; in 1957, he became operations manager of a Ford plant in Lorain, Ohio, and remained with Ford for a total of 37 years, retiring in 1980 as a Senior Vice President, Body and Assembly Operations; and

WHEREAS, in 1992, a senior Ford Executive said at a meeting of the Economic Club of Detroit, "Runyon's strength was that he understood processes and people. He developed a reputation as a straight-shooting, results-oriented manager who never took his eye off his quality objectives or the needs of his employees."; and

WHEREAS, given a 37-year, highly lauded career which received much approbation, many people would have been content to enjoy a life of leisure, but Marvin Runyon was just hitting his stride; the same year that he left Ford he was named President and CEO of Nissan Motor Corp., USA, based in Smyrna, Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Runyon, in building from the ground up Nissan's American operations in Smyrna, also enhanced Tennessee's economic climate; before Nissan, there were only a few thousand automobile-related jobs and no automobile manufacture and assembly in the state, but now the automobile industry accounts for one-third of all the state's manufacturing jobs; and

WHEREAS, in 1988, then-President Ronald Reagan appointed Marvin Runyon Chairman of the Board of the troubled Tennessee Valley Authority; as Chairman, he reduced management layers, slashed the payroll by a third, cut overhead costs by more than 30 percent, and achieved cumulative savings and efficiency improvements valued at \$1.8 billion; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Runyon was able to stabilize utility rates that had risen on average more than 10 percent each year for 20 years, leading the *Wall Street Journal* to describe TVA during Runyon's tenure as "one of the most effective of federal agencies." United States Representative Jim Cooper said of him, "He was very, very tough but fair. He tried to run TVA as a business. He basically demanded and got CEO power. That's what TVA needed at the time - a strong hand."; and

WHEREAS, by 1992, Marvin Runyon's talents were needed to resuscitate the United States Postal Service which faced a large and growing deficit that peaked at \$2 billion in 1993; as the 70th Postmaster General of the United States and Chief Executive Officer of the United States Postal Service, he achieved record rate stability, drove service quality to all-time highs, and prepared the organization to do business in the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, in 1996, the Postal Service had 760,966 career employees and earned \$56.4 billion in annual revenue; *Fortune Magazine* described the Postal Service as the ninth largest business in the United States and the 33rd largest in the world; and

WHEREAS, under Mr. Runyon's leadership, the Postal Service delivered back-to-back years of record-breaking success; following the lowest postage rate increase in 25 years, the Postal Service recorded net incomes of \$1.8 billion in 1995 and \$1.6 billion in 1996, reducing negative equity by more than half. Overnight, on-time delivery scores for First-Class Mail rose to all-time highs, rising from 69 in 1992 to 94 in 1996; and

WHEREAS, facing aggressive competitors armed with new communications technologies, Marvin Runyon moved to strengthen universal mail service by overhauling Postal Service products and mailing guidelines to make them more modern and customer-focused,

rolling out or testing new products and services and applying the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award criteria to Postal Service operations, calling the new integrated managing system *CustomerPerfect!*; the Postal Service also adopted a widely respected financial measurement system called Economic Value Added for executive incentive pay and began working with Congress and the mailing industry to introduce major postal reform legislation; and

WHEREAS, following his retirement from the Postal Service in 1998, Mr. Runyon assumed the Robert E. and Georgianna West Russell Chair of Excellence in Manufacturing at Middle Tennessee State University, where he remained until December 2003, when illness compelled him to curb his activities; and

WHEREAS, Marvin Runyon's abilities and talents found outlets in countless other arenas as well; he was the founder and Chairman of Runyon Group, a business consulting firm based in Nashville, was on the Board of Directors of Triad Hospitals and Alive Hospice and on the Board of Advisors for Centennial Medical Center, Rpost, and Conquest Systems, and was Chairman of the Board of Trust for Leadership Middle Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Runyon was a member of the Society of International Business Fellows and Chairman of its Foundation, had served on the Board of the Electric Power Research Institute, had served on the Chamber of Commerce boards in Nashville, Knoxville and Memphis, the United Way boards in Nashville and Knoxville and had served as a board member of Memphis in May International Festival, Inc.; and

WHEREAS, Marvin Runyon had chaired the Mid-South Minority Purchasing Council's Minority Market Trade Fair and the Tennessee Economic Partner Board and oversaw the Tennessee Minority Business Opportunity Fair in Nashville as it grew to become the largest event of its kind in the nation; he served on the Nucleus Fund Committee and International Programs Resource Development Committee of Texas A&M University and had been a board member of the Tennessee Technology Foundation, the Southeast U.S./Japan Association, Knoxville's Downtown Association, the National Conference of Christians and Jews, United Way of Middle Tennessee and the Rotary Club of Nashville; and

WHEREAS, in 1992, the National Management Association honored Mr. Runyon with its Gold Knight of Management Award for a career of progressive and successful management, and in 1990 he received the Human Relations Award from the NCCJ Nashville Chapter and the

Minority Business Development Agency's Special Recognition Award; he was named "Newsmaker of the Year" in 1998 by *The Knoxville Journal*, "CEO of the Year" by Nashville's *Advantage* magazine and "Manager of the Year" by the Nashville chapter of the National Management Association; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, the Advertising Mail Marketing Association honored Marvin Runyon with its J. Edward Day Award "in recognition of [his] remarkable achievements" during his first year as Postmaster General; in 1997, he received the Mail Advertising Service Association International's prestigious "Miles Kimball Medallion" for his outstanding contributions to the direct mail industry; and

WHEREAS, over the years, Mr. Runyon supported his community in many ways, from fundraising for Nashville Ballet to Vanderbilt's nursing school to the United Way; each year at the Salute to Excellence, the Marvin Runyon Leadership Award is presented to the local nonprofit organization that achieves the most significant results. He brokered a land transfer that paved the way for the former U.S. Post Office at 901 Broadway in Nashville to become the Frist Center for the Visual Arts; and

WHEREAS, Marvin Runyon's image as a hard-hitting, focused and powerful executive sometimes masked a gentler and more accessible side of this remarkable gentleman, who made himself available to people regardless of their position - one who would as willingly make a commencement speech or attend a stamp collectors meeting as attend a presidential inauguration; possessed of a great sense of humor, he served as Chairman of the annual Swine Ball at which he once appeared as the "Pigmaster General" in a cape, blue tights and a giant M on his back, and then changed into a tuxedo to attend the more decorous Swan Ball with his wife; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Runyon was also deeply devoted to his family, and he always endeavored to remain true to family values of the highest order; he enjoyed the loving companionship of his wife, Sue Atkinson, Chairman of Atkinson Public Relations; and

WHEREAS, Marvin Runyon was the proud father of Anne Runyon, Marvin T. Runyon III, Paul R. Runyon, Sr., James A. Runyon, and stepson Brannan Atkinson and the loving grandfather of Charles J. Turner, Kay Turner, and Paul R. Runyon, Jr.; and

WHEREAS, Marvin Runyon was characterized at various times in his many and diverse careers as "the Silver Fox," in essence, he remained, in his heart and soul, the same person who was a young Army veteran working on the assembly line for hourly pay. Mr. Runyon told interviewers, "People see you for what you are, not for what you try to portray." His entire life nobly embodied this principle and inspired everyone who knew and worked with him; and

WHEREAS, Mr. Runyon leaves behind an indelible legacy of integrity and probity in public life, compassion and loyalty in private life and towering achievement, diligence and dedication in all his chosen endeavors; and

WHEREAS, it is fitting that this General Assembly should pause to remember the bountiful life of this exceptional business leader, public servant and human being; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, that we honor the memory of Marvin T. Runyon, reflecting fondly upon his impeccable character, his keen intellect and his stalwart commitment to living the examined life with courage and conviction.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that we express our sympathy and offer our condolences to the family of Mr. Runyon.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.